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SOUTHWEST GALLERY

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

THE NATIONAL PRINT COLLECTION

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

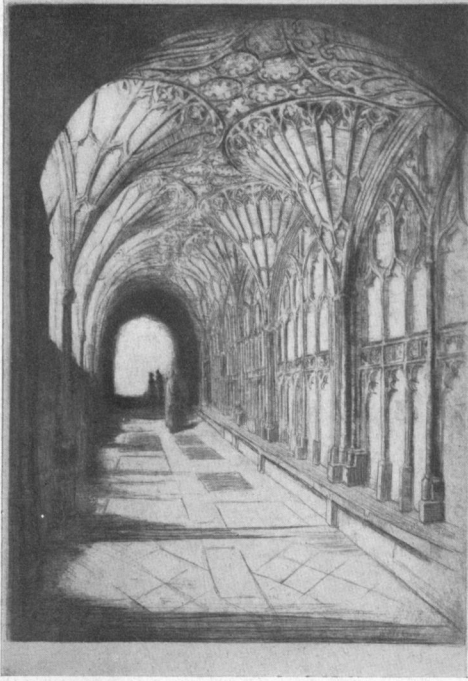
BY D. E. ROBERTS

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THE National Print Collection had its inception in an appropriation act effective July 1, 1897, at which time the Library of Congress took possession of its handsome new building. Its nucleus was the Marsh collection of engravings purchased many years earlier by the Smithsonian Institution, a collection of portraits by St. Memin, and a vast amount of material of very questionable value derived through operation of the copyright law, but neither assorted nor classified. Now it numbers over three hundred thousand prints and photographs, many of which

are of rare value, and in addition to these has on deposit several notable private collections upon which it has the privilege to draw for the purpose of exhibitions. From chaos has come order; from a mass of unavailable material much which is of interest has been secured; and from a mere process of acquisition a policy of service has been established.

The National Print Collection is in the custody of the Division of Prints which occupies the series of extensive halls and pavilions to the south and west on the second floor of the spacious library build-



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ing. Herein are set forth under the auspices of the Division continuous exhibitions arranged for the pleasure and enlightenment of the casual visitor, while beyond are the stacks in which the reserve collections are stored, the art reading room and the office.

Great impetus was given the assembling of the national collection by the gift, in 1898, of the Gardiner Greene Hubbard collection of engravings and etchings—a collection made with astute judgment and affectionate dalliance, therefore both choice and well balanced. Because it was always Mr. Hubbard's greatest pleasure to share his collection with others, Mrs. Hubbard gave it after his death to the American people and provided adequate endowment in her own will for its upkeep and enlargement. The Hubbard collection comprises nearly three thousand prints and is especially rich in the works of Rembrandt and Dürer. One of its unique features is portraits of Napoleon and Frederick the Great. Next possibly in importance to the Hubbard gift is that of the late Crosby S. Noyes, who

in his lifetime presented to the Library of Congress a valuable collection of prints, original drawings and illustrated books by celebrated Japanese artists. In the interest recently awakened in the art of Japan this collection has been of great service to the public as well as to students and connoisseurs. Among other gifts which also have increased the value of the national collection may be mentioned as of special interest the George Lathrop Bradley collection, which includes, among its examples of various schools, an uncommonly fine group of Turners; a collection of two hundred and twenty prints presented by the French Government from the Chalcographie de Louvre; seven hundred and sixty-one fac-similes of copper and wood engravings of the old masters, a gift from the German Government; a collection of three hundred photographs of Japanese paintings from the Japanese Government; and, lastly, a collection of engravings from the Regia Chalcographie given by the Italian Government in recognition of the kindness shown by the United States



ETCHING

E. M. SYNGE



THUNDER WEATHER

F. V. BURRIDGE

Government to the earthquake sufferers at Messina. These contributions from the several foreign governments and from collectors and lovers of art throughout the United States show a recognition of the importance of the National Collection and value of such a repository as the Library of Congress at the seat of National Government. The usefulness of this collection will be further established in connection with the National Gallery and the Freer gift at Washington, as it has already been felt by the art students and lovers of the District of Columbia.

But the National Collection has not been exclusively built up by gift or chance. Purchases are made from time to time as means permit in order to increase the material on Americana, notably portraits, historical illustrations and works of American engravers not represented; to complete the various processes of engraving and more especially to increase

the resources for the study of the history of art and architecture, and of the works of celebrated artists and sculptors. About forty thousand photographs have been purchased abroad within the past three years. These have been mounted, classified and arranged in portfolios for ready reference. From them it is possible to study the works of the well-known painters and sculptors in the public galleries of all the great cities and in some of the private collections. The Whitaker collection of sixteen hundred lithographs, separate prints, and book illustrations, has also been purchased, together with complete collections of the Arundell Society and Medici Prints. An effort is made, moreover, to acquire promptly modern work in etching and engraving which would seem to merit permanent preservation, in accordance with which policy several of the etchings reproduced herewith as illustrations were very recently

added to the collection. Such action, if continuous and consistent must, it is felt, encourage and stimulate production of a high order.

But what is more, the National Collection has been supplemented and strengthened from time to time by loans, the owners of valuable collections having generously placed them on deposit in the Library of Congress permitting their use. Thus in 1905 the T. Harrison Garrett collection of engravings was lent to the Nation. Because of its richness this collection has been drawn upon liberally. Its Rembrandt etchings and reproductions of Rembrandt paintings, its collections of works by Haden and Whistler, its numerous mezzotint portraits, as well as rare impressions and unique states, make it of inestimable value for reference purposes. To the thousands of visitors who daily pass through the exhibition halls at the Library of Congress it has proved a great boon.

Reference has already been made to the exhibitions of prints set forth under the auspices of the Division of Prints. Through these the service of the Division is greatly extended. Nearly one million visitors pass through the Library of Congress annually, hence an exceptional opportunity is given to bring before the public reproductions of the works of the masters. Space will not permit description of the exhibitions which have already been held, but mention may be made of the Rembrandt and the Dürer as specially notable, of the works of French etchers of the nineteenth century as peculiarly interesting, and of engravings from the Royal collection of Italy, and by Callot and Della Bella, as now current.

The facility for exhibiting prints in the Library of Congress is unsurpassed. Large mahogany cases and winged frames for all sizes of prints are arranged for convenient inspection in the spacious west main hall, southwest gallery, and southwest pavilion, and even in the south curtain, where the large cases for storing prints are placed, the doors are adapted admirably for exhibition frames.

With the equipment of special furnishings in the reading room of the Divi-

sion of Prints, suitable cases for the storing of the collections, and the classification of prints and books, special service can readily be rendered. The public has access to the catalogue of the Print Collection and books on art and to the current periodicals on art and architecture, the arts and crafts, and every required help is given the reader or student by trained assistants. That this service is made of avail is indicated by the fact that during the past year there have been nearly seven thousand readers registered, to whom have been served nearly two hundred thousand prints and photographs and over nine thousand volumes on art, architecture, and the allied arts.

The collection of books on art to which the public may have access through the Division of Prints is very large, and constantly being increased through the operation of the copyright law, as well as by gift and purchase. In 1899 this collection comprised 25,000 volumes and during the past decade it has grown rapidly, care being taken to fill in gaps, complete sets and extend subjects inadequately covered. All of the volumes in this collection, as well as the current periodicals, are listed by authors and subject, and thus made especially available for reference; the card catalogues being very complete, and methodical in arrangement.

The outside service has, up to the present time, been limited to the loan of photographs to teachers instructing classes at the Universities and art schools, and to art clubs and study classes. It is now purposed, however, with the permission of the Librarian, to lend certain duplicate material for exhibition in the public schools of Washington, through the League for the Decoration of the Public Schools, and such prints as may be otherwise available for exhibition in other cities and towns through the American Federation of Arts. This will undoubtedly extend its usefulness and promote interest in the establishment of branch collections. That so much has been accomplished in twelve years may seem little less than miraculous, but that it has been done should engender confidence and stimulate endeavor.